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AUTHOR Hudson, Harold
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ABSTRACT

Written in simple prose, the story tells how the Tsimshians near present-day Prince Rupert, Canada, first happened to meet the Whitemen. Sope and a group of Tsimshian men are hauling in their fishing canoe when they sight a sailing ship. All the men flee in fear except Sope who is tied to the canoe. The Whitemen row ashore in rowboats. When they offer Sope bars of soap as a gesture of friendship, he thinks they are saying his name. He laughs and calls back his frightened friends to meet the new arrivals. The story is presented in large print with illustrations on each page. (SB)

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SOPE

A TSIMSHIAN STORY

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SOPE

A TSIMSHIAN STORY

Developed by the Staff of the
National Bilingual Materials Development Center
Rural Education Affairs
University of Alaska
2223 Spenard Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99503
Dr. Tupou L. Pulu, Director

From a story told by
Harold Hudson of Metlakatla, Alaska

As a joint project with the
Alaska State Department of Education

Illustrated by J. Leslie Boffa

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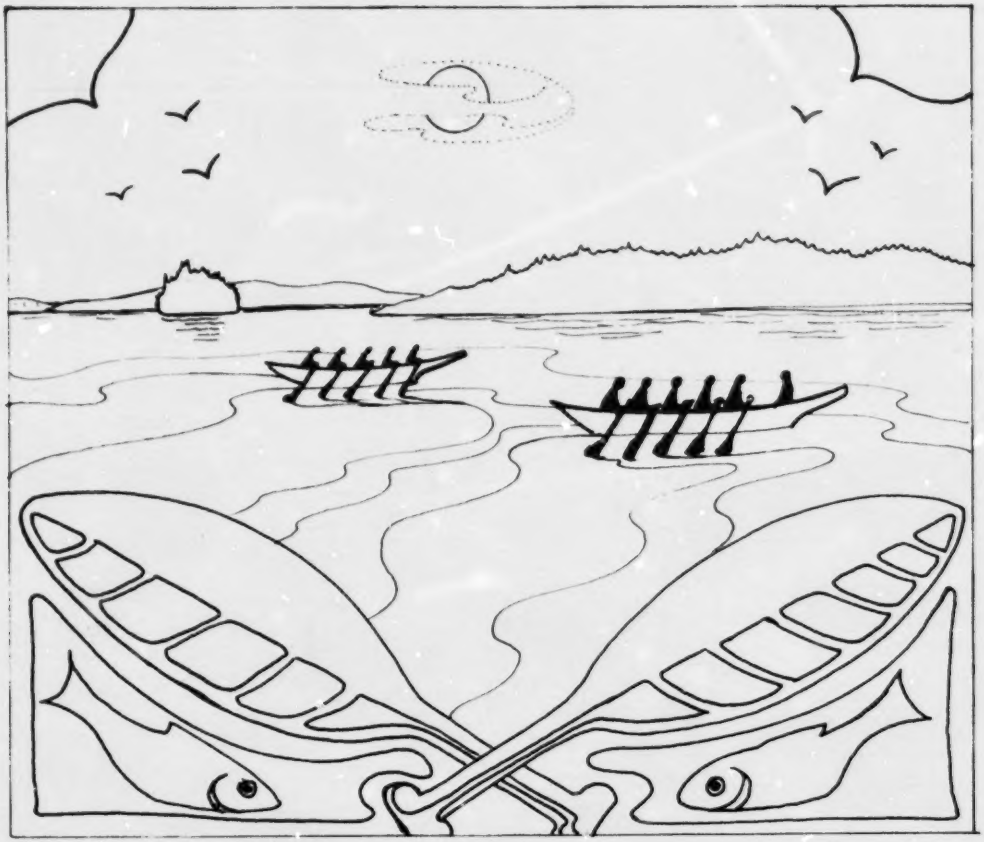
A group of Tsimshians were living on the mainland. Their village was near the place where Prince Rupert is today.



The men fished from large wooden canoes.
They used paddles to make them go.

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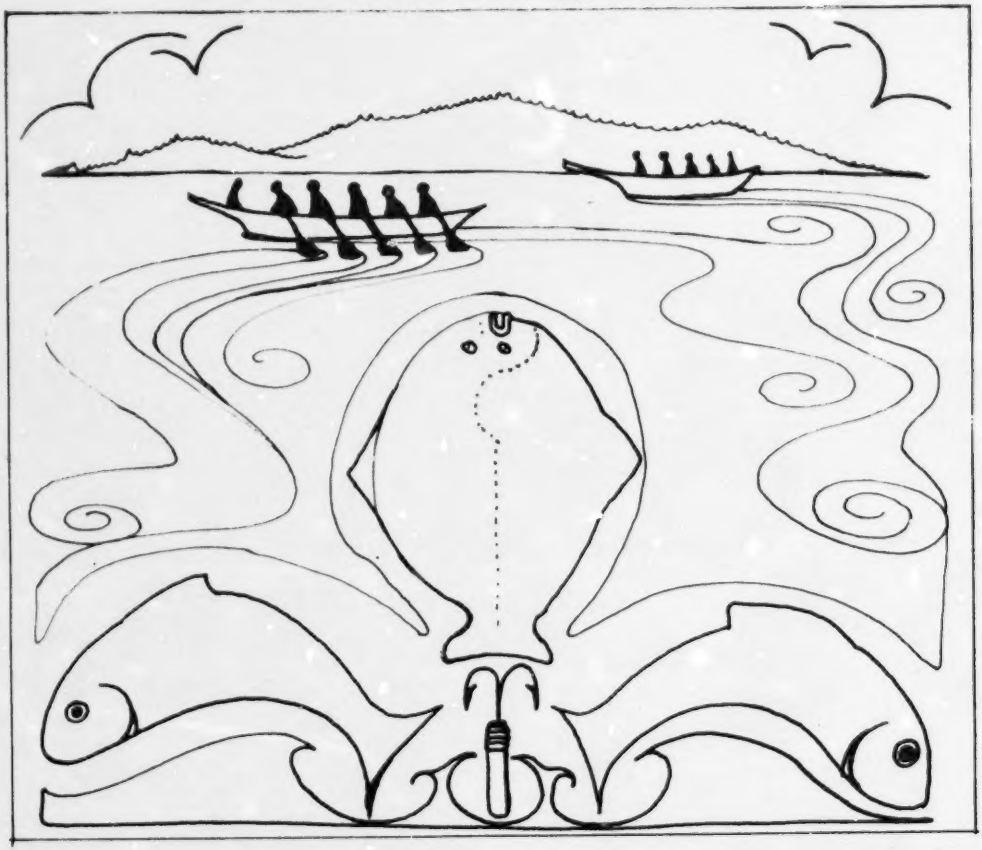

They had fish hooks made of wood and bone. The men caught halibut and cod and other sea fish.

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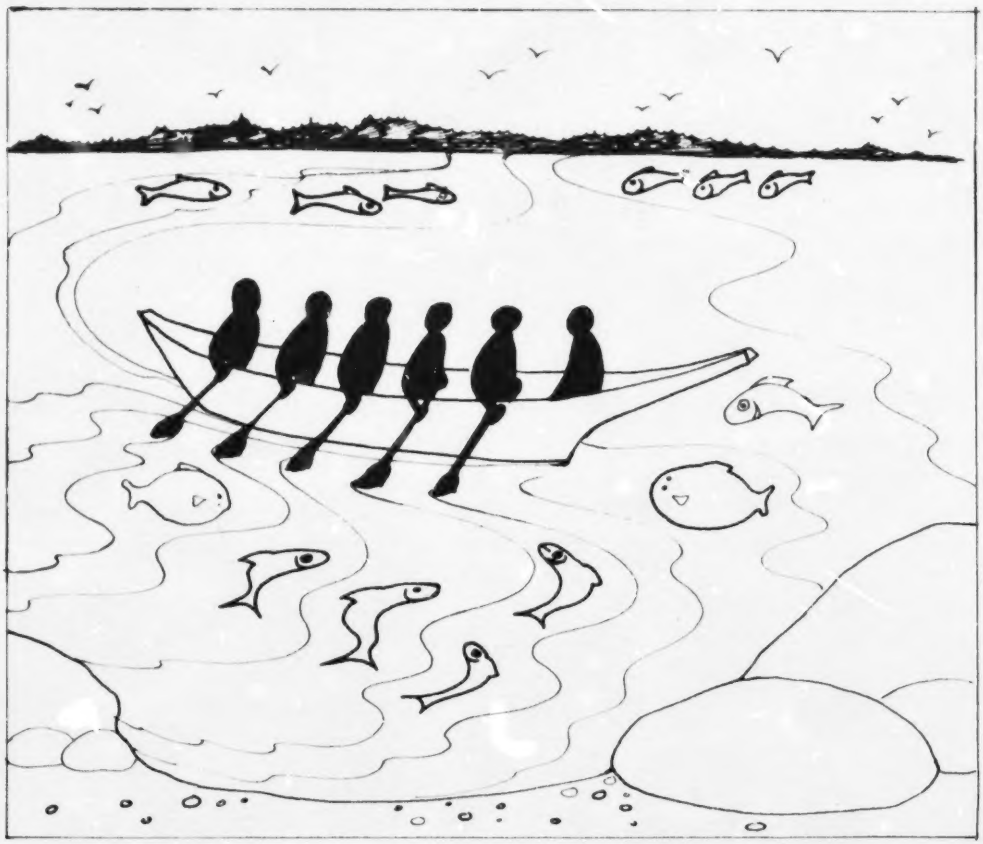
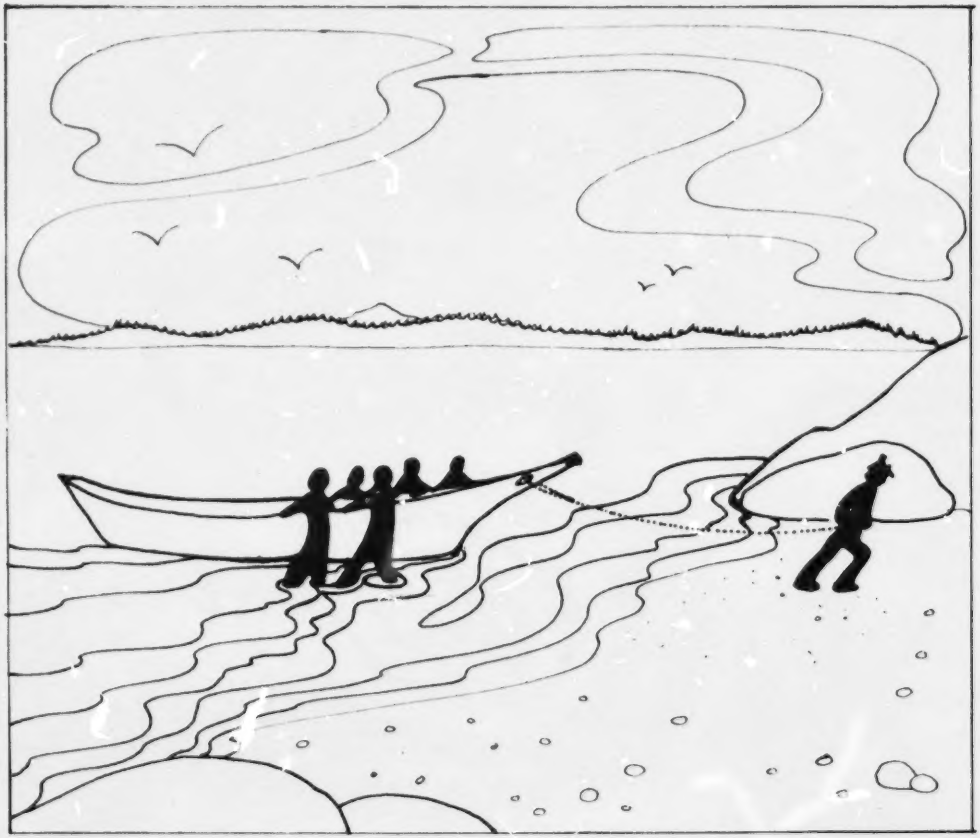


One day the men came home from fishing.
They had many large fish and they were happy.

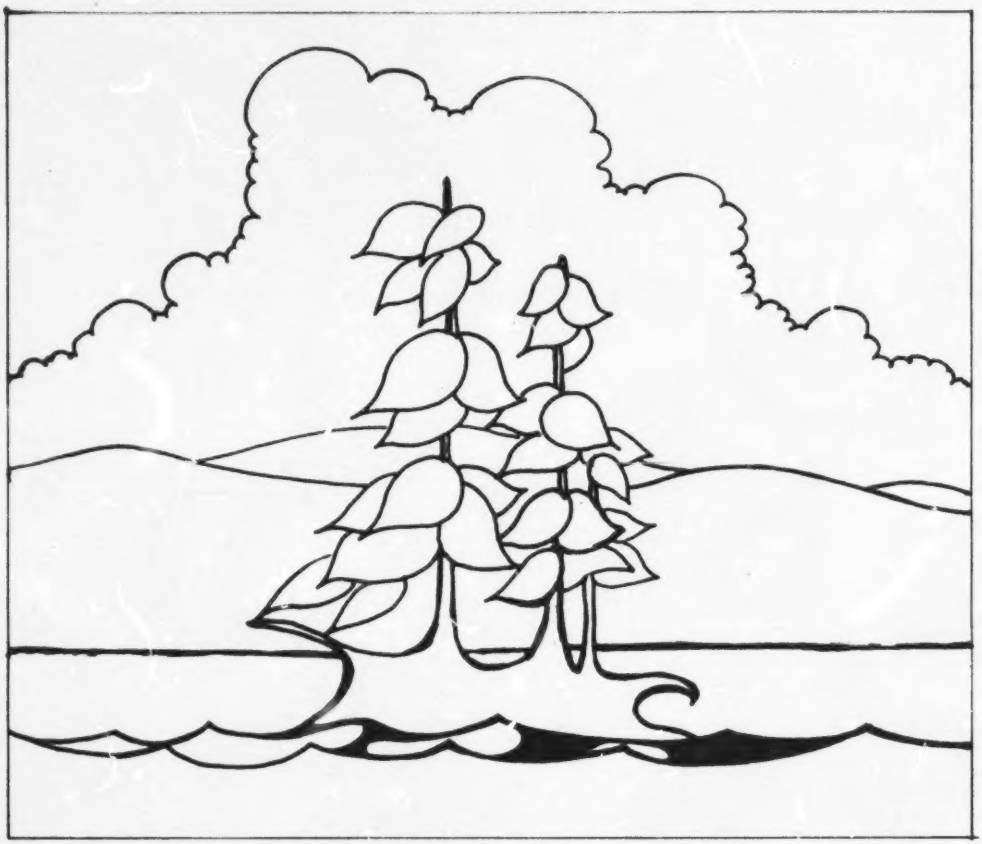


They pulled the canoe up on the beach. One of the men, Sope had the canoe rope tied around his waist.

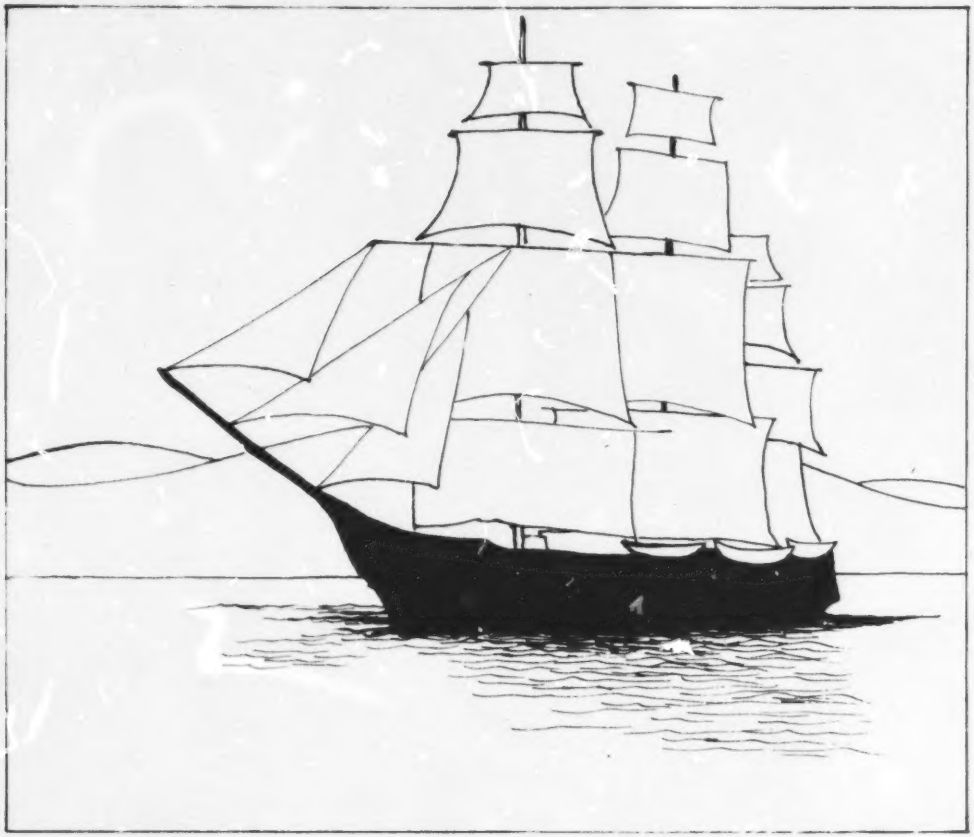
A man cried out in alarm, "What is that? What travels on the water?"

Ali of the men looked out over the water.

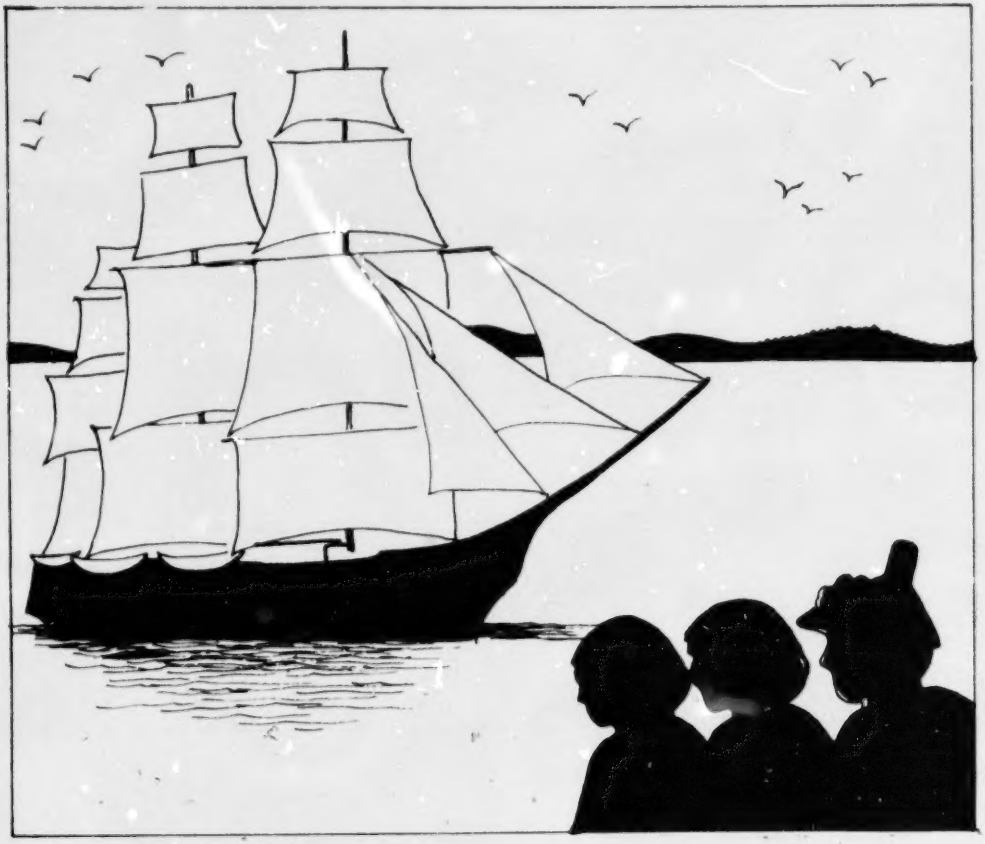
"Aieeee! Never have I seen such a thing," said Sope.



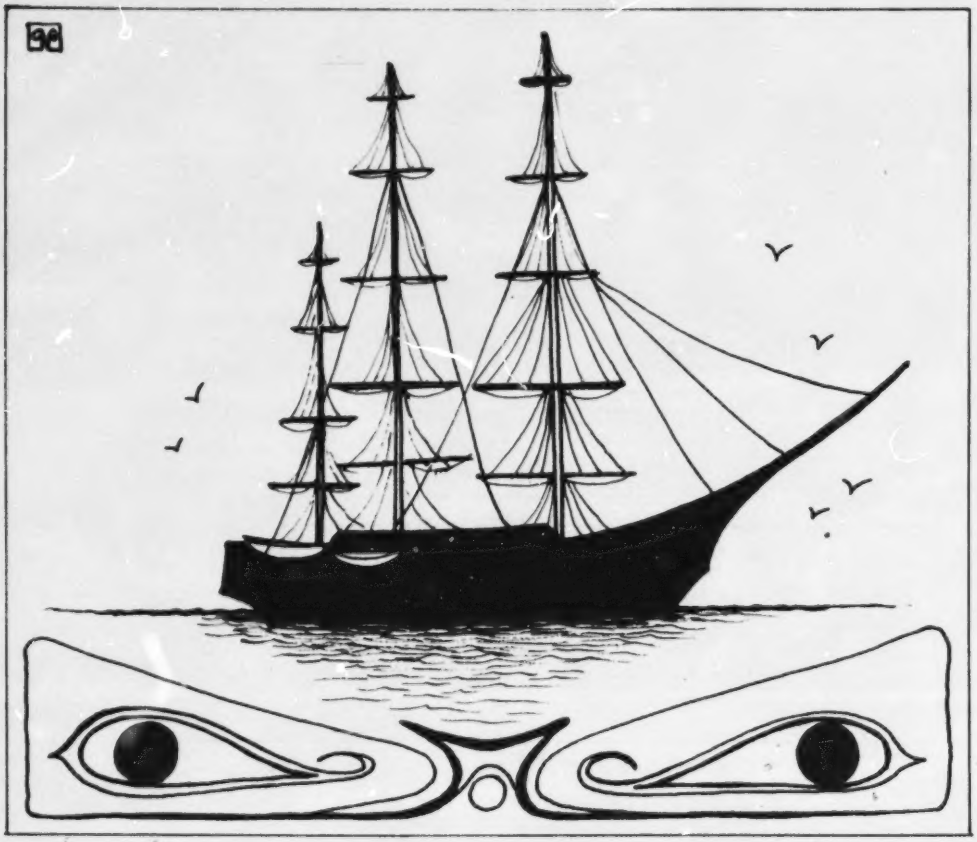
"Trees with white leaves? That can't be true. Maybe it's a cloud hanging over the big canoe."



The men watched the big canoe. It came closer. Never had they seen such a thing before.



The canoe came closer and closer. It was very big! The men were so surprised that they could hardly move!



The big white leaves fell from the tree.
The canoe stopped dead in the water.

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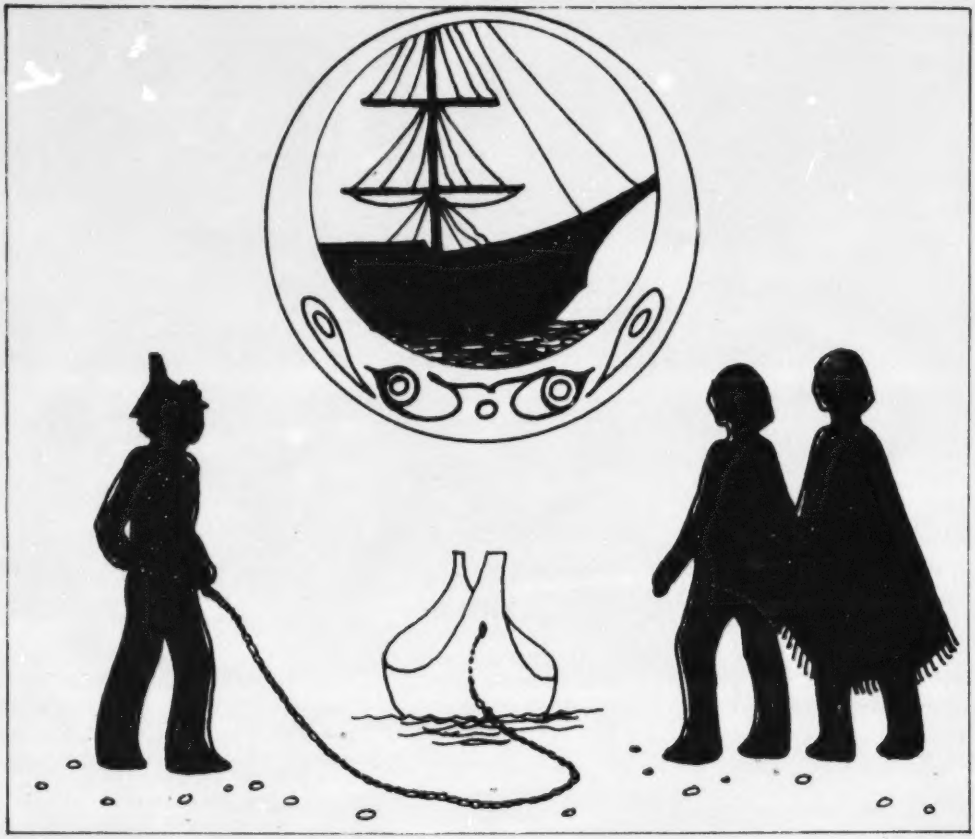
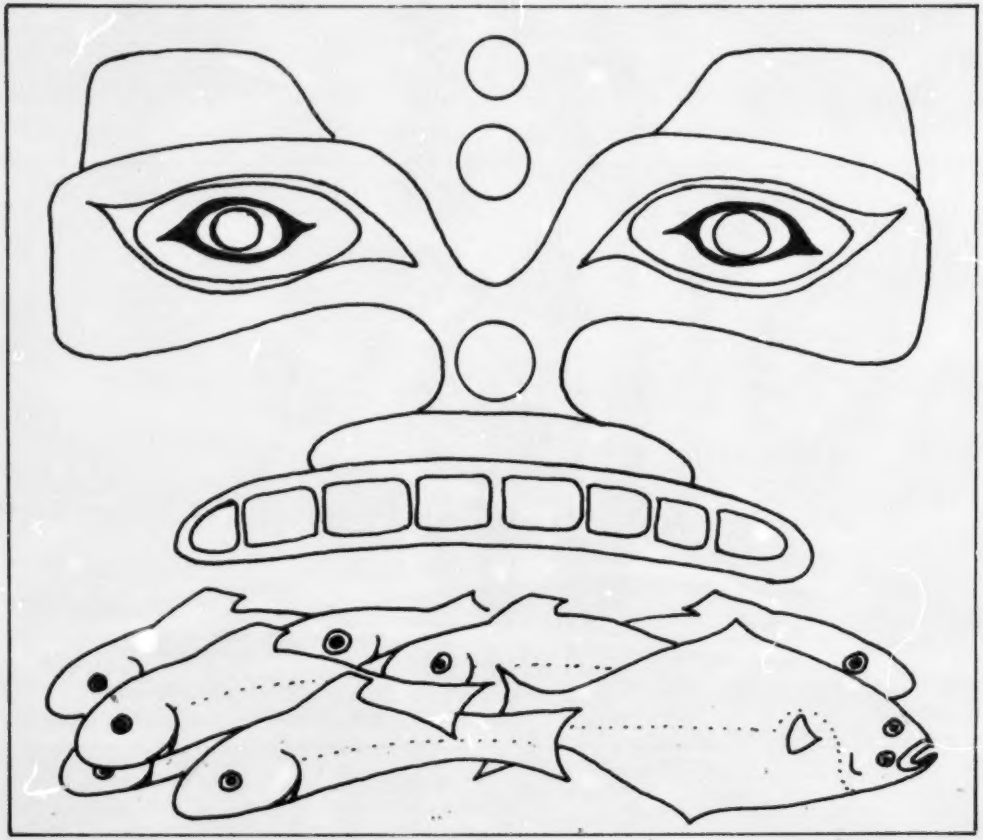
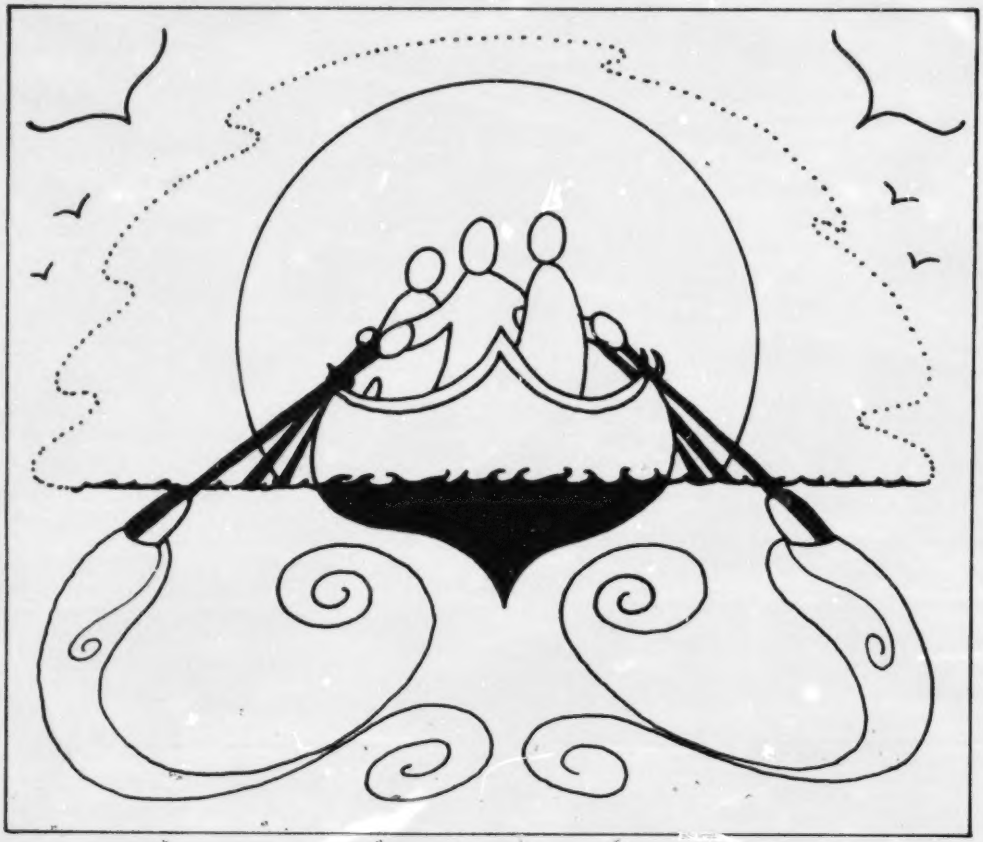


It was very quiet. There was no talk among the men. There was no movement. They just stood and watched.

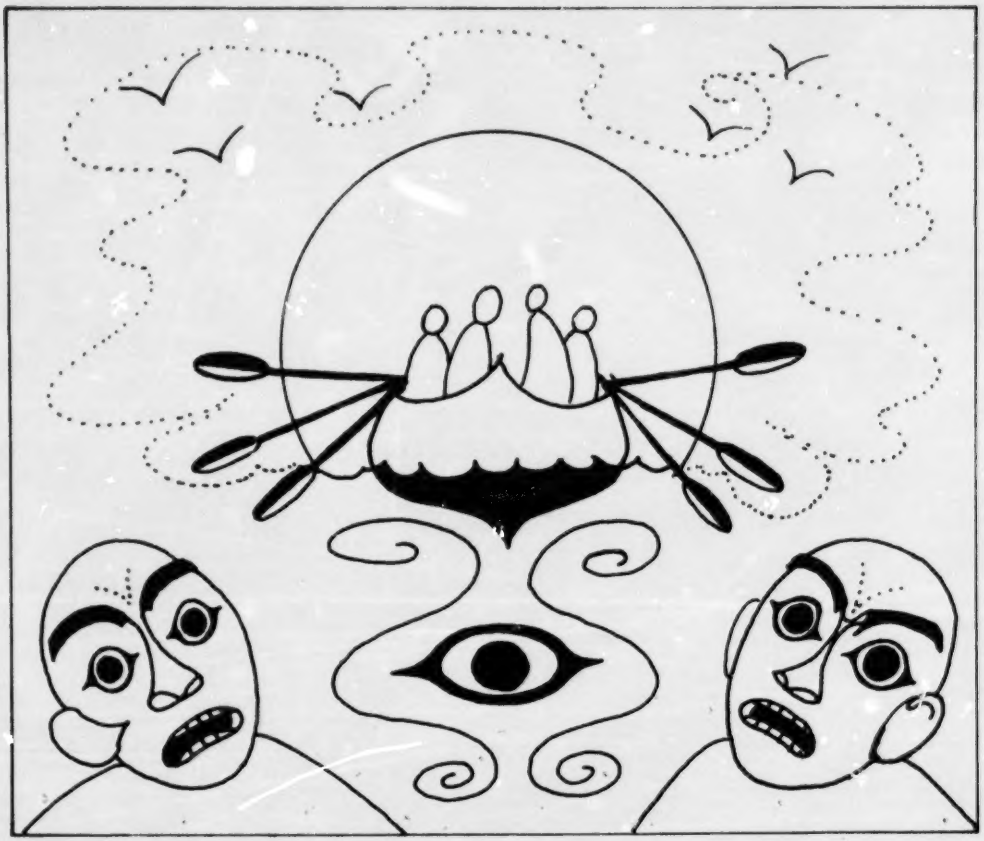
A small canoe came out of the big canoe. It sat on the water. It sat by the big canoe.



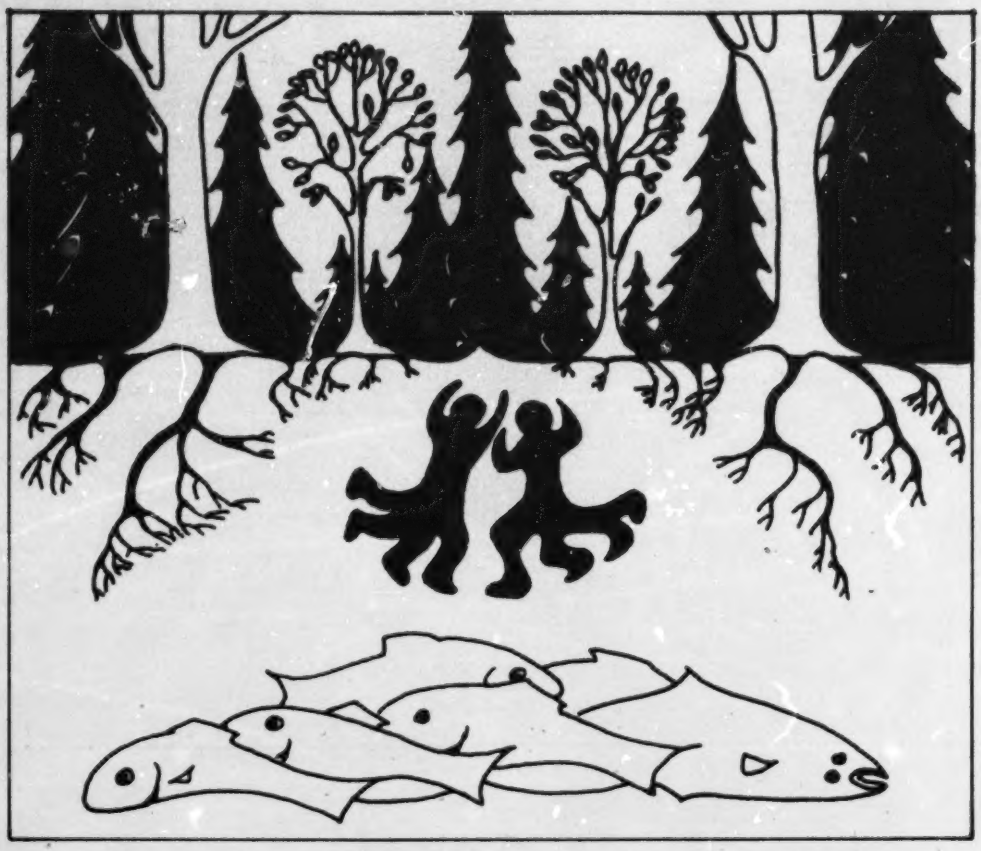
Still the men watched. They had forgotten their work. The big fish lay on the beach where they had been dropped.



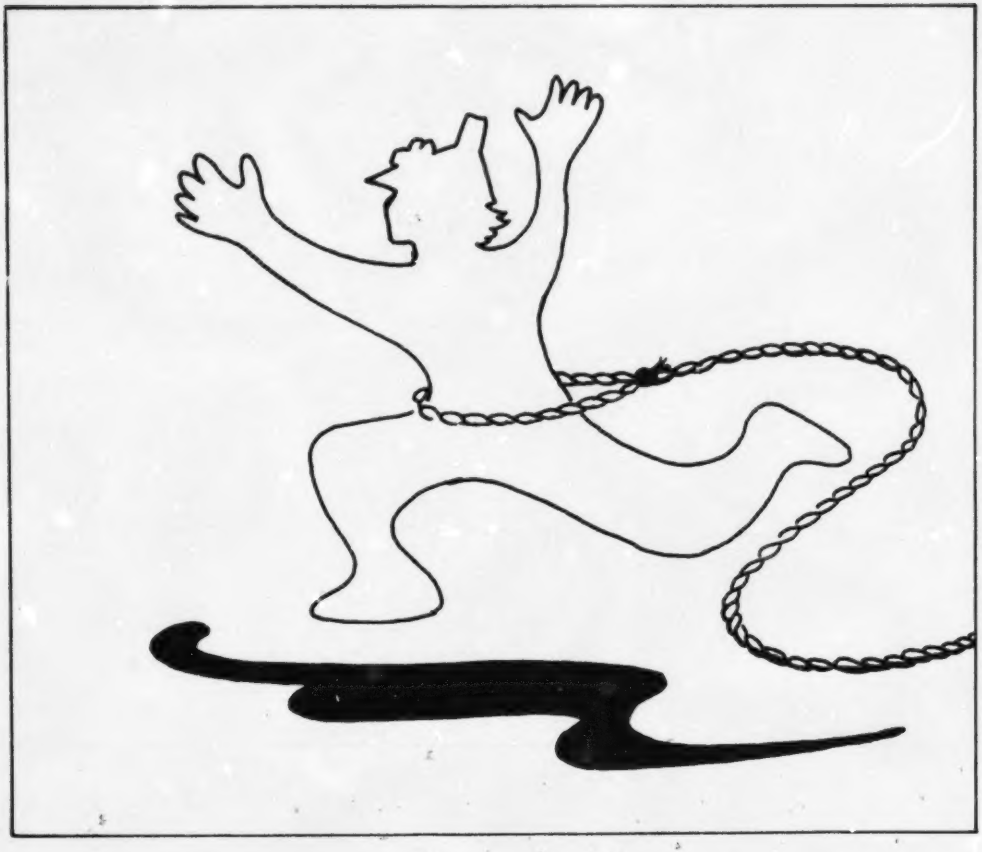
The men watched the little canoe. They saw oars sticking out from each side of it. The oars began to churn the water. They had never seen a rowboat. They didn't know what it was.



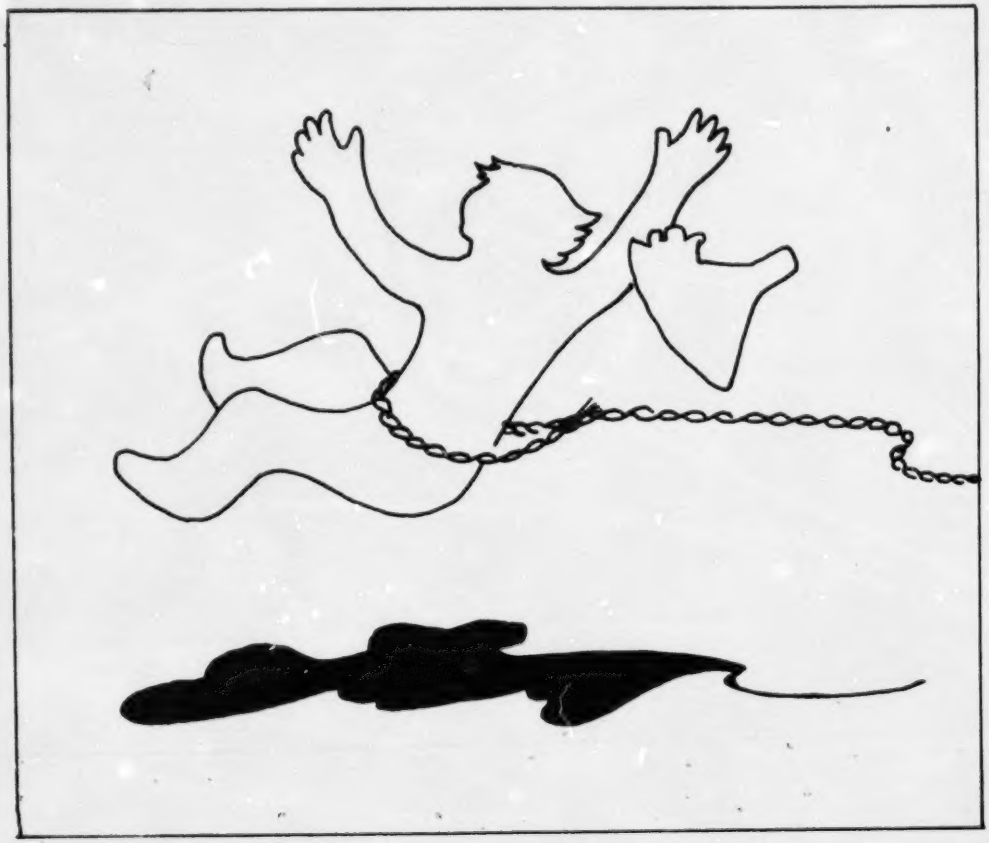
"Aieeee! It's not a little canoe. It's a sea monster," they cried. "See all of its legs! It is swimming toward us!"



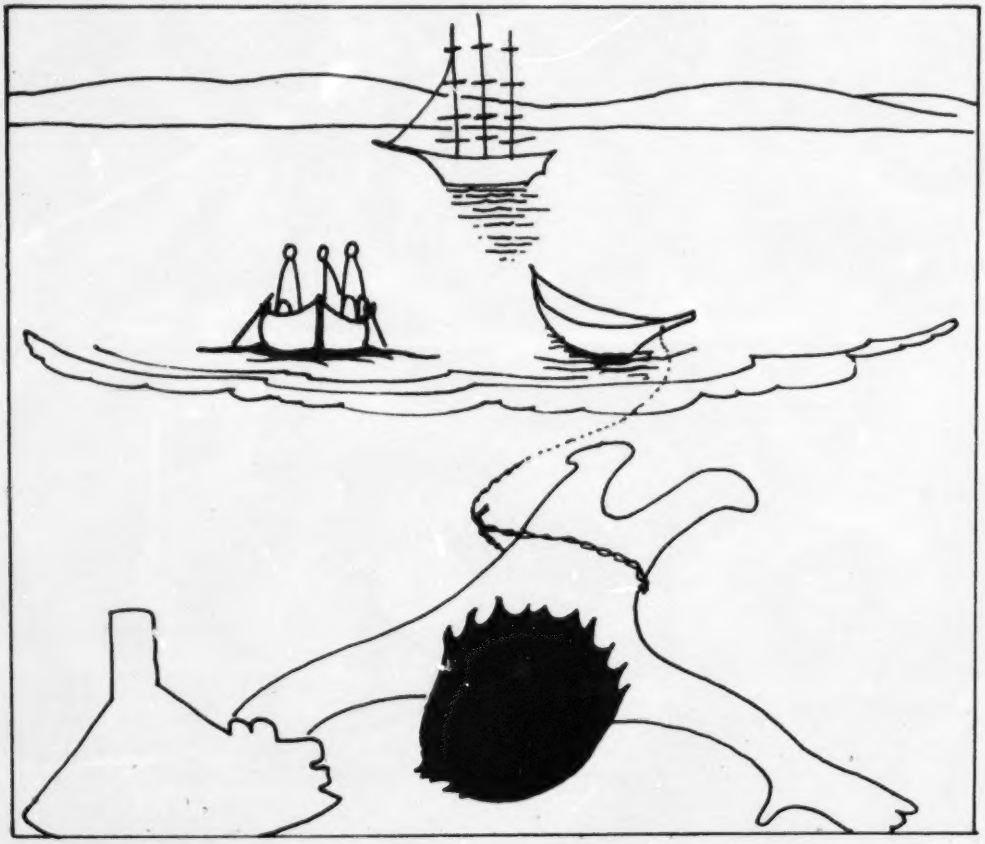
The men began to move. They turned around and ran into the woods. The fish were left behind on the beach.



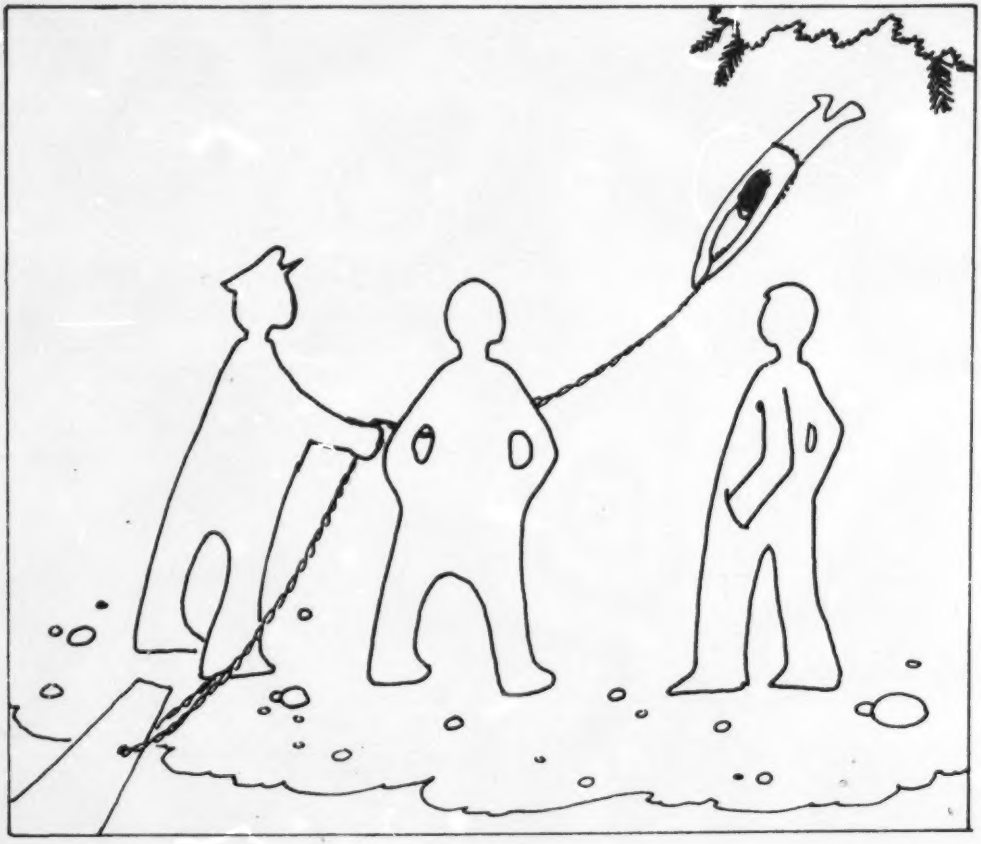
Sope ran up the beach with the other men. He forgot that the canoe rope was still tied around his waist.



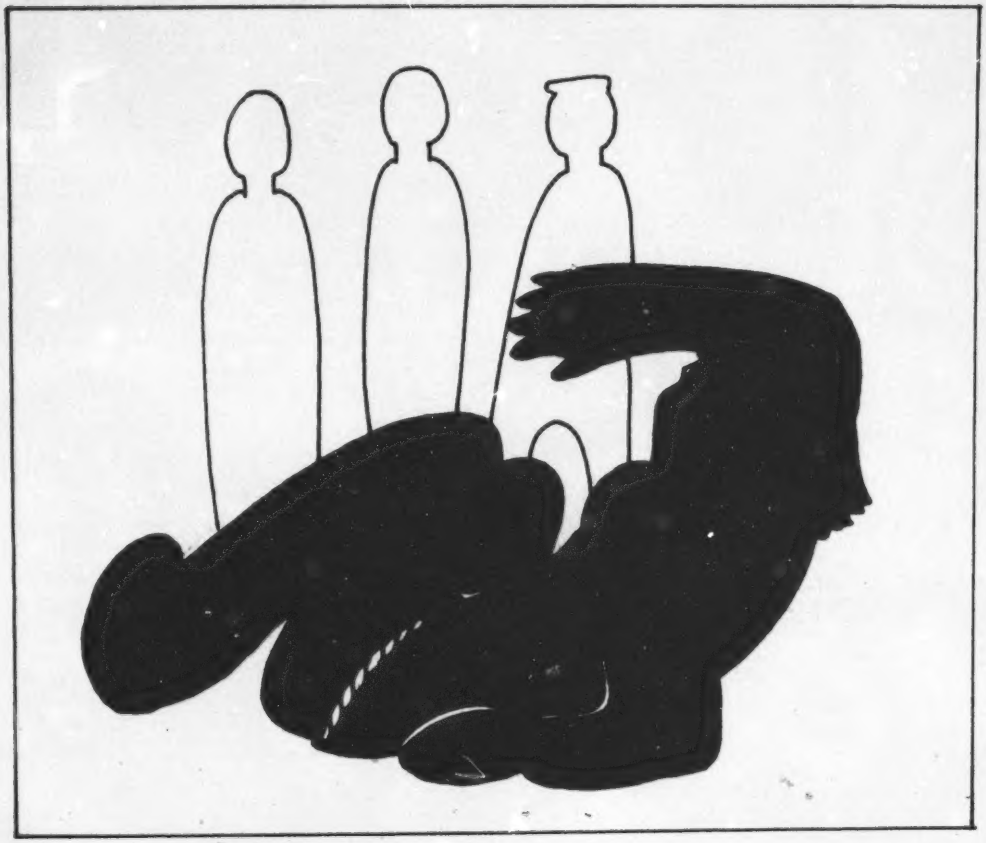
Suddenly, Sope reached the end of the rope. He was like a ball on the end of a ruober band. The rope pulled him back and he fell to the ground.



The fall knocked the air out of Sope. He lay on the ground, gasping for air. It was just at this moment that the rowboat reached the shore.



The men looked at the beached canoe. They saw the rope tied to the end of the canoe. They picked-up the rope and pulled on it.



Sope was pulled like a large fish on the end of a line. He was pulled back to the beach and ended up at the feet of the other men.

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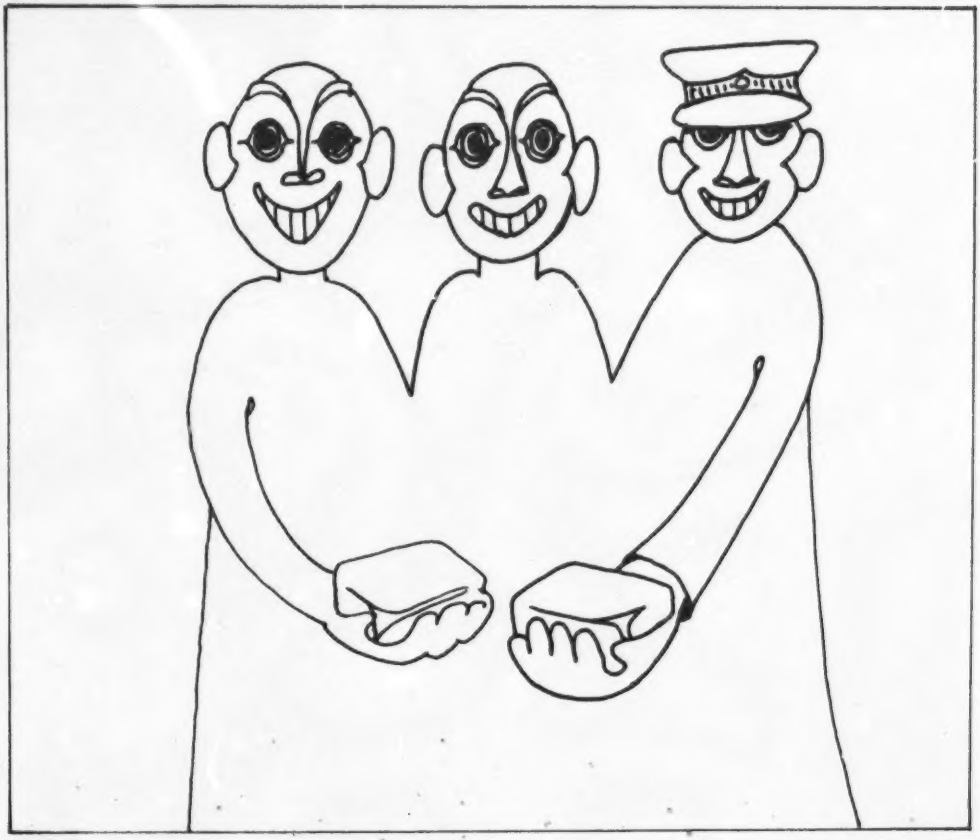
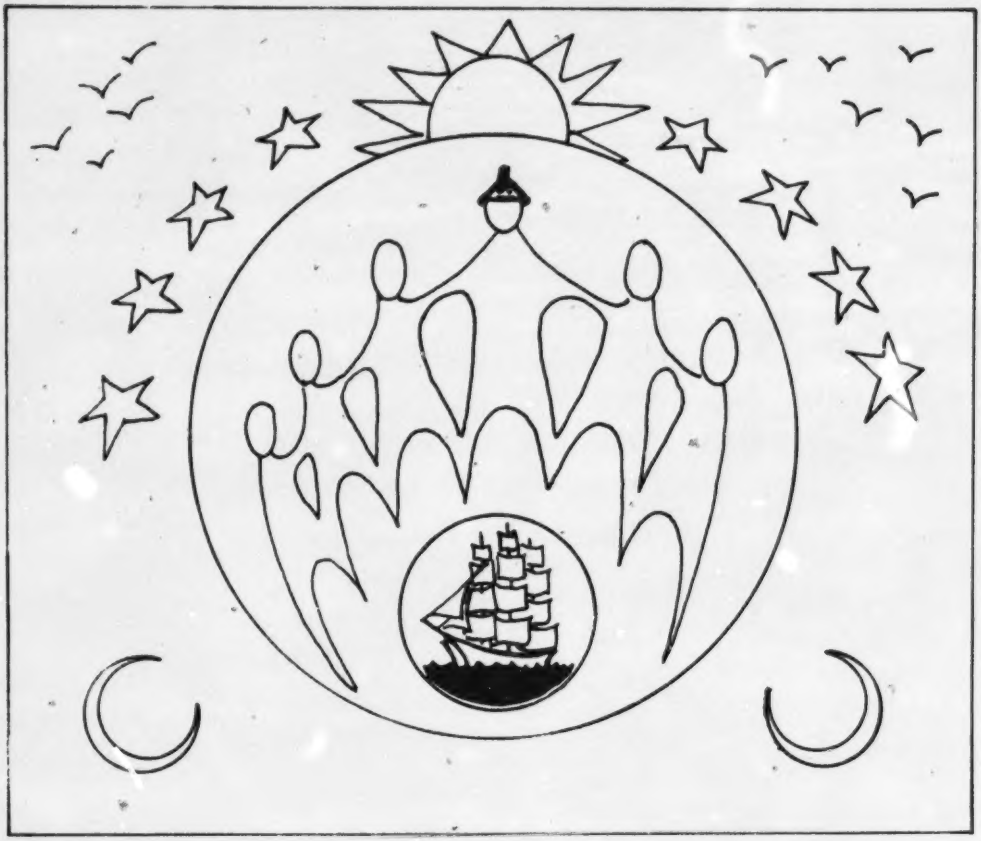


The men were laughing. They wanted to give Sope a present. They gave him a bar of Soap. They said, "Soap, soap."

Sope didn't understand that soap was the name of the gift. He thought they were saying his name. He called to his friends up in the woods, "Listen, they know my name!"



Sope laughed. The men from the boat laughed. Sope's friends came back to the beach. They all laughed together. Fear was forgotten. That is how this group of Tsimshians first met the Whitemen.